

Dear Mr. Dowdy:

Thank you for your presentation before the Mississippi River Commission during the public meeting held in Cape Girardeau, Missouri, on April 7, 2003.

In your statement you discussed the topics listed below.

The annual herbicide program

The Memphis District currently has a multi-year indefinite delivery and indefinite quantity aerial herbicide contract. While the District understands your concern about allowing vegetation on ditch banks to "grow up," certain guidelines are followed. Generally, once a channel clearing contract has been completed the channel is included in the herbicide program rotation. However, most channels with large bottom widths (150 feet or greater) are not scheduled for treatment because tree growth on those banks does not hinder channel flows. Likewise, channels with old-growth trees on the banks are not scheduled for herbicide treatment due to the ineffectiveness of herbicide on large trees. With these guidelines in mind, the District will continue to execute this program to the extent funding and priority permit.

Planned channel maintenance from the Missouri-Arkansas state line to the Marked Tree Siphon

Regarding your request concerning channel maintenance from the Missouri-Arkansas state line to the Marked Tree Siphon, the Memphis District has initiated two analyses, one for Stateline Outlet Ditch and one for the St. Francis Basin system. That portion of the study between the Missouri-Arkansas state line and the Marked Tree

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Siphon should be complete by December 2003. As requested, the District will advise you of those results. Future maintenance work will be planned based on the results and local input.

Funding, capability, and the use of funds in the St. Francis Basin maintenance project

The Commission recognizes your concerns about annual funding levels of the St. Francis Basin maintenance project. We appreciate your efforts and those of your board in securing additional funding for the project. The Corps will continue to efficiently execute

work in the St. Francis Basin to the extent funding and priority permit.

Populations of endangered mussels

Regarding populations of endangered mussels, the Memphis District does not currently have data on whether mussel populations have increased or decreased in the St. Francis Basin. As information regarding mussel populations becomes available, the Memphis District will provide this data to you. Mr. Mark Smith of the Memphis District environmental staff is knowledgeable about issues relating to endangered mussels in the St. Francis Basin and is available to discuss these issues with you at your convenience. Mr. Smith's telephone number is (901) 544-0670.

The need to construct the St. Johns Bayou-New Madrid Project

You expressed your opinion that the St. Johns Bayou - New Madrid Floodway project is long overdue and encouraged timely initiation of construction. Memphis District is in the administrative appeal process and is currently working with both the Missouri Attorney General's Office and the Missouri Department of Natural Resources in an effort to resolve issues and obtain water quality certification.

The annual St. Francis Basin O&M Partnering Meeting

We appreciate your interest in the Memphis District's annual St. Francis Basin O&M Partnering Meeting. These meetings provide valuable input to the Memphis District from local interests. Based on feedback received from local interest groups, additional groups may be invited to these meetings (e.g., Mainline Mississippi River

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Levee sponsors, other Federal agencies, etc.). The Memphis District will continue to hold these meetings on a regular basis.

Freedom of District Engineers to make decisions

Regarding the freedom of District Engineers to make decisions, no change has been made in recent years to hinder a district's decision-making ability. However, in order to fully execute available funds on the highest priority items, a regional management approach has been undertaken for large programs such as the Mississippi River and Tributaries Project. At the beginning of

and during each fiscal year, each district identifies a prioritized list of work for the fiscal year. These priorities must be approved on a regional basis to ensure they meet division-wide priorities. If changes are needed during the year, they are approved by the Mississippi Valley Division.

The need to listen to local interests

Forums such as these public meetings and the St. Francis Basin O&M Partnering Meeting allow valuable input from local interests. We will continue to strive to listen to and involve local interests.

Thank you again for your presentation. The Commission appreciates receiving your comments and will be pleased to hear from you at our future public meetings.

Sincerely,

Don T. Riley
Brigadier General, U.S. Army
President Designee, Mississippi
River Commission